

March 11, 2010

To Our Representatives and Legislators,

My name is Carol Vinick. I have been a Nurse Practitioner working in school-based health centers in Hartford since 1978. I have worked in elementary, middle, and high schools. Since 2001 I have been working at The Wellness Center at Bulkeley High School. I see a steady stream of students seeking care for episodic sick visits, state mandated physicals, sports physicals, chronic illness management, health prevention, and reproductive health services.

I was dismayed to hear that the School-Based Health Centers are on the list of items to be cut from the Governor's Budget. This would be penny wise and pound foolish. Our service is very inexpensive. Our providers are Nurse Practitioners with a part time Medical Director for all of our clinics. Our overhead is covered by the school system. Our clinics dispense medication that comes in bulk, often for a few dollars a prescription. If these same students went to the ER the bill would be at least 10 times what we charge the State.

Our asthma program keeps our asthmatics healthy while saving the State a great deal of money. In addition to doing preventive asthma care, we treat students with acute asthma. Most of the time we are able to treat them with a nebulizer and send them back to class. At the same visit we make sure that their asthma regimen is appropriate, and that they are able to comply with their regimen. Before we had school-based health centers these same students would have been sent to the Emergency Room and then followed up with their Primary Care Provider. Our thirty-five dollar visit would otherwise have cost hundreds and hundreds of dollars.

Adolescents are not as likely to seek care if it is inconvenient for them. We provide a full range of reproductive health services including pregnancy testing, STD testing(including HIV testing), condom availability, and birth control at a one-stop-shop. We are preventing pregnancies, and assuring that students get treated for STD's in a timely manner. One day I got a call from our State Lab with 5 positive Chlamydia's. All 5 students were treated by 11:00 am. This kind of efficiency rarely happens anywhere else in health care.

We provide a very important service for our young people at a low cost to the State of Connecticut. Please do not allow this service to disappear as it helps so many of our students.

Sincerely,

Carol J. Vinick, A.P.R.N.